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Cavaliere Niccolini Grimaldi, a Neapolitan by birth, arrived in London about the year 1708. He was attracted by (as he was informed) the rage prevalent amongst us for foreign operas. The high reputation which he brought with him he sustained, according to the testimony of Sir Richard Steele, in the *Tatler*, a critic not likely to have been, as the patentee of an English theatre, very lenient to the faults of a foreign artiste. Niccolini was not merely a superior vocalist, but a superb actor, and possessed of a fine person. He was a great addition to the London company, and the theatres became places of general resort. Playgoers were, however, at this time deprived of one of their stars. Mrs. Tofts was obliged to quit the stage in the meridian of fame and beauty, from symptoms of incipient insanity. The *Tatler* alludes to this in unfeeling terms. Mrs. Tofts afterwards married, and removed with her husband to Venice. Here her old disorder returned, and with intermitting violence afflicted her to the time of her demise, that is, for a long period of fifty years, as she died in 1760. Her place was supplied by some good English singers,—Mrs. Cross, Mrs. Lindesay, and others. One termed "The Baroness," a foreigner, was likewise a favorite, as also Cassani and Isabella Girardeau.

There seems, however, to have been, after Mrs. Tofts' retirement, a dearth of good singers for about ten years. The deficiency was supplied by making Niccolini the centre of attraction. How this was done is familiar to the readers of the *Spectator*. Those who are accustomed to peruse its pages will remember all that is said of Niccolini's combat with the lion, "which," says Addison, "has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain." The *Spectator* pays a high tribute to Niccolini's powers as an actor and singer, lamenting that the great artiste was forced to comply with the wretched tastes of the age. Nothing can be more amusing than the description of the different representatives of the lion. "It was confidently affirmed," says the *Spectator*, "that there would be a tame lion sent from the tower every opera night, . . . and that the lion was a cousin-german of the tiger who made his appearance in King William's days. Many, likewise, were the conjectures of the treatment which this lion was to meet with from the hands of Niccolini. Some supposed that he was to subdue him in recitative, as Orpheus used to serve the wild beasts in his time, and afterwards to knock him on the head. . . . The lion has been changed upon the audience three several times: the first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy, choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so early as he ought to have done. Besides, it was objected against him that he reared himself so high upon his hinder paws, and walked in so erect a posture, that he looked more like an old man than a lion. The second lion was a tailor by trade. If the former was too furious, this was to sheepish for his part. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-colored doublet, but this was only to make work for himself in his private character as a tailor. The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed."

This extract gives us some idea of the prevalent theatrical tastes. Such were not indulged in for the first time, as they had already been displayed in the case of the opera of "Camilla." This was composed by one of the Buononcini's, and here Mrs. Tofts was appointed to kill a pig! The personator of this member of the animal creation thus opens his grief to the *Spectator*: "I think I was hardly used in not having the part of the lion in 'Hydaspes' given to me, but that of a lion is too great a character for one that never trode the stage before but on two legs. As for

the little resistance I made, I hope it may be excused, when it is considered that the dart was thrown at me by so fair a hand. I must confess I had but just put on my brutality; and Camilla's charms were such, that beholding her erect mien, and hearing her charming voice, and astonished with her graceful motion, I could not keep up my assumed fierceness, and died like a man." These stage foibles were brought into requisition by even Handel, in "Rinaldo," the first of the long series of operas produced in London. "As I was walking in the streets about a fortnight ago," writes Addison, "I saw an ordinary fellow carrying a cage full of little birds upon his shoulder; and I was wondering with myself what use he would put them to, he was met, very luckily, by an acquaintance who had the same curiosity. Upon his asking him what he had upon his shoulder, he told them that he had been buying sparrows for the opera. 'Sparrows for the opera!' says his friend, licking his lips. 'What, are they to be roasted?' 'No, no,' says the other; 'they are to enter towards the end of the first act, and to fly about the stage.'"

Handel's arrival in London, and his being intrusted with the management of the Royal Academy, became instrumental in bringing under the notice of the public some of the greatest singers that the world probably has ever heard. He, however, was with us for some years before the Academy was formed. During this time a songstress made her appearance, Anastasia Robinson, who deserves notice less from her professional ability than the romance of her life. She was the daughter of a portrait painter, who, becoming afflicted with blindness and a consequent inability to earn a livelihood by his art, was forced to bring up his child to the musical profession. For this she evinced peculiar aptitude. Her father took a house in Golden Square, where he gave weekly concerts or musical *conversaciones*. These were attended by some of the first people in the metropolis, and here she gave earnest of those abilities and accomplishments which she subsequently displayed. Her debut was in 1714, in a *pasticcio* called "Creso," and she continued to enjoy popularity as a principal singer till 1724, when she left the stage.

Her retirement was supposed to have arisen from an insult offered by Senesino,—a singer we shall speak of presently; but the real cause was her marriage—not made public till more than ten years afterwards—with Lord Peterborough. This nobleman had distinguished himself for bravery during the war of the Spanish Succession. Whatever his physical bravery may have been, his moral courage does not appear to have been very striking. For a lengthened period he refused to recognize his wife as Lady Peterborough, till forced by circumstances to do so. It was a tardy piece of justice, since her position had exposed her to the taunts of the aristocracy.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu thus writes of her to a friend: "The fair lady rides through the town in the shining berlin of her hero, not to reckon the more solid advantage of £100 a month which 'tis said he allows her." The alliance, however, beyond all doubt, was from the beginning honorable. At first, on Lord Peterborough's part, it was intended to be otherwise; but the object of his attentions at once betrayed the utmost indignation at such a proposal. Lord Peterborough, too much smitten with her charms to abandon his suit, wooed and won her honorably. As a person of rare accomplishments and of a most amiable temper, she was worthy of a better partner. Her vocal power was not considerable and her execution was absolutely nothing as compared with Cuzzoni and others. Still, in her style, there was something telling, arising from the utter absence of any effort at display. As an actress she was very efficient, and quickly gained the good will of the theatre by her modest deportment and her pleasing, expressive, though not by any means beautiful countenance.

About the period of Anastasia Robinson's marriage arrived in London one who is memorable as a singer of extraordinary power, Francesca Cuzzoni. She was born at Parma, and made her *debut* at Venice in 1719. She came to England in 1723, and remained amongst us, in the enjoyment of unimpaired popularity, till 1729, when she returned to Italy. She visited England twice again, but on the last occasion she was old and songless. After this she went to Holland, where she became straightened in her purse, and was put into prison for debt. After delighting Europe with her voice, and receiving the homage of princes and nobles, Cuzzoni passed her closing years in great poverty, and was able to preserve herself from starvation by button-making.

"Imperient Cezar, dead and turned to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.  
O that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw,"

Cuzzoni's extravagance helped to ruin her, along with her violent and quarrelsome temper, which arrayed against her the whole musical world. Sometimes she would, as the saying is, meet with her match: as when on one occasion, refusing at a rehearsal to sing one of her songs in an opera of Handel's, the enraged composer threatened to throw her out of the window. No, one, however, dared question Cuzzoni's wonderful excellence as a singer. Her voice, more especially the high notes, possessed three qualities seldom combined, namely, clearness, sweetness, and flexibility. She not merely evinced astonishing skill in the execution of hard passages, but did so in such a way as to veil from view the difficulties of the performance. Her interpretation of pathetic music would dissolve an audience in tears, while the refinement which she could bring to bear on notes, either as regards tone or duration, elicited the admiration of the learned. Her embellishments, apparently extemporaneous, often enriched a melody, and were always conceived in excellent taste. Her shake, was perfection itself and it seemed as if it would be impossible for her to sing out of tune.

(To be Continued.)

## THE HOME OF VICTOR HUGO.

(Continued.)

In the embrasures left on each side by the projection of the general construction, two old Japanese monsters grimace and look at themselves in two mirrors with grot-work frames.

The canopy is of Chinese silk, ornamented with faces and birds.

Six pedestals with golden brocade cartouches support the statues and monsters.

A small Louis XIII. clock, representing the Samaritan woman, rests upon the slab of the mantelpiece.

Two tables, one in *Renaissance* ebony, incrustated with tin, which formerly belonged to the Duke of Orleans, the other in marquetry, of the Louis XIV. style, with massive feet, are displayed here. The latter is a perfect gem. There is, beside, a marvelous screen, which looks as if it had escaped from Mme. de Pompadour's *boudoir*; a handsome china *vasque*, and a Japanese perfume stand made of bronze, which was given to Victor Hugo by Alexandre Dumas, complete the furnishing of this room.

The blue parlor, which is next in order, is no less sumptuous in another order of decoration.

The gallery in the second story opens with a folding-door, and is formed of carved and chiseled cedar, a masterpiece found by Victor Hugo. This gallery is called the "Oak Gallery," it is a sort of guest chamber, in fact. Six windows, looking out upon Fort St. George, distribute the light through a perfect forest of carved oak.

Occupying double the depth taken for the parlors on the first story, the "Oak Gallery" is

divided into two parts by a skillful arrangement of the furniture, and a handsome doorway with spiral columns in *Renaissance* style, painted and gilt. In the first division is the mantelpiece; in the second is seen a magnificent bed, so vast that it seems rather to have been built than put up.

The mantelpiece, which is wide, low and massive, is enriched with the most delicate workmanship. It represents the sacrifice of Isaac, which is placed in an oaken frame, embellished with two demi-balusters entwined. Four caryatides, two feet high, hold up this charming pediment. They represent repeatedly Sylvanus with Dryads. All the figures are crowned with flowers and fruits, and their bodies are partly concealed under a scabellum ornamented with fine arabesques. Behind these exquisite statuettes is a large glass placed on a level with a construction in Holland delf; in the middle is a pedestal which supports a Celadon drinking opium, an exquisite face, such as would please the most fastidious antiquary. The two lateral wings are formed of very rich panels, upon which the scabellum of the caryatides rests. It would be vain to attempt to describe the wilderness of Biblical, Pagan and Chinese figures, in which art has blended baboons' heads with Dryads' faces.

The bed fronts the mantelpiece, the head of it resting against the wall and the feet directed towards the spectator. The canopy is formed of an assemblage of *Renaissance* panels; the head of the bed holds forward two mythological subjects, accompanied with small columns and spirals surmounted by a bracket-pedestal in ebony, crowned by a death's head in ivory, with this inscription: "*Nox, mors, lux.*" The body of the bed has a *basso-relievo* upon the front, a curious specimen of the carvings of the Middle Ages. A *lambrequin*, embroidered in a thousand colors with silk, and a spread in tapestry, serve to garnish this gigantic bed, in which no one has ever slept, and which could only have been equaled in feudal sleeping rooms.

A candelabra in oak, with forty candles, is placed between the two columns which divide the gallery. It was entirely executed upon designs by Victor Hugo, who modeled and carved the crowning figure in wood. It is a colossal girandole, spreading like a tiara, and bearing upon its summit a cluster of branches, to which the candles appear to attach flowers of light.

The door of entrance, seen from the interior, is as brilliant as a church window. Two spiral columns sustain a pediment of oak, with *Renaissance* grotesques, surrounded by arabesques and monsters; it advances with two folds, which are resplendent with paintings, among which are eight large fissures of the martyrs, attired in gold and purple, the principal being Saint Peter. Upon the lintel is inscribed "*Surge, perge,*" and near it the words of Lucan: "*The conquerors have the gods, with the conquered Cato remains.*" There are maxims besides: "*Gloria Victis—Væ nemini.*"

"Mind breatheth where it listeth,  
Honor goes where duty calls."

and below a clock, which sounds a merry chime as the hours goes by:

"All leave their trace upon the frame and mind;  
All wound, alas! the last one health."

Isolated by their situation in the midst of the sea, the inhabitants of Guernsey are sailors, and seek their life and its relations without. Each house bears an indispensable signal mast, and has a "look out." As soon as a ship appears, the *oriflammes* of the port signal it, and on the instant signals repeated from house to house tell of the departure or return, throughout the island.

Victor Hugo has chosen the look-out at Hauteville House for his own room. It is a little belvedere, open in all directions, where the soul can expand, though the space is as limited for the

body as a captain's cabin. There stands the poet's table, his paper upon it, with ink and pen. It contains an iron bed, as hard as a soldier's couch.

The garden is but a half-acre of flowers and lawn, and contains a pretty bit of water, surrounded by a grassy margin; two honest ducks perform the part of swans as well as they can, near a terra-cotta fountain, at the base of which are dolphins' heads, throwing miniature cascades into the air. On lifting the ivy around the fountain, I found on one side the inscription: "Where hope is, there is peace." On the other side, this verse, from the "Contemplations":

"Immensity is being, eternity the soul."

The poet sits in the garden, and looks—toward France!

#### FOREIGN ART GOSSIP.

The Opera Comique, Paris, is rehearsing a three-act opera, "*Le Salteador*," words by Messrs Corman, and Meilhae, score by M. Jules Cohen. The Gaité is about to bring out "*La Reine Margot*" in splendid style. During 1865, 130 manuscripts were sent to the manager of the Odeon; 119 were read and replies sent to the authors: eleven are still unread; thirteen were accepted; ten definitively, and three laid over for further consideration; six of the ten have been played, four are unplayed: "*Les Hadibes*," five-act, by M. E. Cadol; "*Les Deux Jeunes*," two-act, by M. C. Potron; "*La Conjuración d'Amboise*," five-act, verse by M. Louis Bouilhet, and "*Placidie*," tragedy, three-act, by M. Viennet; all of them will be played next winter. This statement has been published by the manager in reply to a letter from the Government charging him to pay more attention to the works of young authors. The present state of dramatic art and literature attracts a good deal of attention in Paris just now. A petition recently addressed to the French Senate prayed the French Comedy and the Odeon should be obliged to play Corneille's, Racine's, and Molière's pieces three times a week; another petition sought to have reading committees reestablished in all the theatres, and to have a law passed providing all plays in verse should be performed. A gentleman of great theatrical experience justly says, speaking of reading committees: "They are periodically asked by rejected authors. Accepted authors—accepted may be because they have talents—think it best to read their pieces first to managers and then to actors. The experiment of reading committees has often been made. It has not been many years since Bocage was manager of the Odeon; his letters patent obliged him to have pieces presented read before a reading committee. It was composed of a watchmaker, a chocolate maker, and a dry-goods merchant. They had free tickets for every performance, and were delighted. After the piece was read, they would turn to Bocage and ask: 'Well what do you think of it?' He would express his opinion, and they would ratify it by their votes. Can you conceive twelve shopkeepers hearing a fairy piece read without its machinery, costumes and scenery. They would unanimously exclaim: 'It is unparadoxically stupid.' The manager would reply, 'I beg your pardon, gentlemen; it is not stupid; above what you hear, there are 200,000 francs which you don't see. You jeer as improbable the scene in which Prince Charming is deprived of his talisman, and having no vessel at his command, embarks in a shark's belly to join Princess Charming in the Coral Kingdom. I reckon on this very scene to make my fortune. The Coral Kingdom animated by fairies and dancing girls, and lighted by electric light, will make all Paris come to my theatre.' The stage, or play, is composed of various elements, which cannot be appreciated from a literary point of view upon reading a manuscript play. Such a piece is, absolutely speaking, absurd and impossible; take Frederick Lemaître to it and the combination becomes superb. The most popular

drama of the day in Switzerland, Germany, and the German courts of France is the "*Life and Death of Abraham Lincoln*" in seven acts; the author of the words is a Herr Renlem of Munich, the composer of the music—on the continent all dramas, almost all plays are accompanied with music, which, when one is accustomed to it, supports the actor well and deepens the impression he would make—the composer is Herr Kerling, likewise of Munich. The actors who play the parts of Mr. Jefferson Davis and Mr. A. Lincoln have taken the latter's photographs for models and "make up," themselves closely resembling these well-known public men. It is said Mr. A. Lincoln is especially well "gotten up." The curtain rises on A. Lincoln as a heavy porter in New York City in 1832, carrying trunks from hotels to steamboats, boxes from vessels to warehouses—all on his back. The second act shows him a lawyer's clerk in 1840. The third act represents him as the man of the people in Springfield, Ill., where he occupies the first place at the bar, and where his political probity and great oratory make him the most eminent man in Illinois. But his "rude frankness of speech" makes him some enemies; he refuses his niece's hand to Wilkes Booth in unmeasured language, which wounds the actor and makes him Lincoln's bitter enemy. The fourth act discovers Surratsville "one of the suburbs of Richmond," where Mrs. Surratt is seen attempting to take from her husband the bottle of brandy in which he finds courage to proceed with the conspiracy. The conspirators meet at her house. At their head is Jefferson Davis; he makes a long speech to impress on their minds the Confederate cause is lost unless by some means "the inflexible Abraham Lincoln" is removed by poison, steel or seizure. But exclaims Mr. Davis, "what hand will be intrepid enough to strike the tyrant?" A man, hitherto disdained, advances and exclaims: "Mine!" 'Tis Wilkes Booth. The fifth act represents Lincoln worn down, exhausted, prematurely old, tortured by the memory of the torrents of blood which have flowed "for his idea," as he is reproached by a mother whose only son has been drafted into the Federal army. At times Lincoln is half crazy. Nevertheless, he calms himself, and remembering the promise he made to his wife, they both go to the Washington Theatre, where "*King Lear*" is to be performed. Mr. Lincoln, "his wife Mary," and Miss Harris, enter a stage box; the theatre is full; on the stage of Washington Theatre *King Lear* is played; suddenly a pistol shot is heard; women scream; Lincoln groans and falls; a man leaps from the stage-box on the stage, brandishing his dagger, and exclaiming "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" when the curtain slowly falls, the orchestra playing a dirge. The continental newspapers, almost without an exception, severely censure the introduction of Mr. Davis into this play and charging him with a crime of which he is notoriously innocent. Mons. Roger is singing at Vienna.

#### NOTES IN ROME, ARTISTIC AND SOCIAL.

No one who visits Rome can fail to remark the highly-dressed, dark-eyed group that sit silent and picturesque on the grey steps of the Trinita di Monte.

Scarcely any one at home but has heard of the models who wait in the sunshine of the Piazza di Spagna to be hired by artist or dilettante. We are familiar with the names of Beppo and Stella; and the faces in every second picture of the R. A. exhibition reproduce likenesses of those handsome, idle Italians.

But beyond their poetic names, and the outlines of their smooth, dark faces, little is heard in this country of the Roman models; and I venture to hope that what I learnt to know of them and their ways may prove interesting to those who have patience to read what I can tell.

Far out in the country around Rome, in the rocky hill-passes, and on the grey, lonely plains, the peasants still wear white head-gear and bril-